

Online Shopping: More Popular (Yet Less Satisfying) Than Ever

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By Brad Tuttle Jan. 03, 2013

Based on the sales figures, consumers are increasingly content to turn to the web to get their holiday shopping done. Judging by survey data and heaping anecdotal evidence, however, we're increasingly dissatisfied with online shopping in general. [...]

The biggest argument in favor of online shopping is that it eliminates the hassle of having to go to a store, but still, online shopping is hardly without hassles.

Perhaps the most public critique of online shopping appeared in a New York Times op-ed just before Christmas. The piece's title – "The Hell of Online Shopping" – reveals that the experience didn't go so well.

Among the problems: Purchased items were shipped to the wrong people; presents that were supposed to be gift-wrapped never were; cards alerting the recipients where the goods came from were buried deep inside packages or weren't included at all; and, of course, clearing up these matters with customer service was a maddening, time-consuming process. [...]

Complaints about online shopping aren't limited to obvious cases in which orders were screwed up, or to the idea that one-click shopping eliminates some of the magic of the season of giving. The analytics firm ForeSee asked more than 24,000 consumers about their recent online shopping experiences, and overall, we're not overjoyed. On a 100-point satisfaction scale, e-retail as a whole received a score of 78, down from 80 in the 2011 holiday season. Several major retailers posted notable declines in online customer satisfaction—most obviously J.C. Penney, which, after a sluggish year in sales, saw its customer satisfaction rating drop 6% in the study. [...]